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Hearing re HR 23, April 18, 2007
House Veterans' Affairs Committee

I am webmistress of American Merchant Marine at War, www.usmm.org, online since March 1998. I research the accomplishments and sacrifices of mariners since 1775, with particular focus on World War II. My husband served in the Merchant Marine and Army Transport Service during World War II, and with the Military Sea Transportation Service during the Vietnam War.

H.R. 23 "Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2007," **deservedly** provides \$1,000 per month to WWII mariners (average age 83) or their widows, in lieu of benefits not received after World War II.

Praise from President and Military Leaders

President Franklin D. Roosevelt:

"... the entire country joins me ... in paying tribute to you men of the Merchant Marine who are so gallantly working and fighting side by side with our Army and Navy ..."

Dwight D. Eisenhower, General of the Army:

"The truly heroic man of this war is GI Joe and his counterpart of the Air, Navy, and Merchant Marine."

Douglas MacArthur, General of the Army:

"I wish to commend to you the valor of the merchant seamen participating with us in the liberation of the Philippines. With us they have shared the heaviest enemy fire. On this island I have ordered them off their ships and into fox holes when their ships became untenable targets of attack. At our side they have suffered in bloodshed and in death... I hold no branch in higher esteem than the Merchant Marine."

Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, U.S. Navy, Chief of Naval Operations:

"The Merchant Marine Service has repeatedly proved its right to be considered as an integral part of our fighting team."

Mariners: First to Go, Last to Return, Highest Casualty Rate

American merchant ships got their first taste of war in **October 1939**, with the capture of the unarmed SS City of Flint by a German pocket battleship. This was the only ship to fall into enemy hands intact. The first mariner war casualty died Nov. 1940, when his ship struck a mine. The last mariner death was recorded in March 1947, again due to a mine. Mariners faced danger from the enemy as soon as they left a U.S. port.

Mariners from SS Connecticut were in the Bataan Death March. Mariners from Justine Foss were executed on Wake Island or worked in Japanese coal mines. Mariners from the SS Sawokla slaved on the River Kwai Railroad. Mariners on the SS Jean Nicolet were forced from their lifeboats onto the deck of a Japanese submarine, and with hands tied, forced to run a gauntlet of clubs and machetes. The sub submerged with men on deck.

Cadet-Midshipman Edwin O'Hara fired the coup-de-gras that sank the auxiliary cruiser Stier, the only German surface warship sunk by an American ship. O'Hara and Paul Buck, Master of the Stephen Hopkins, were among those who went down with the ship.

Mariners took part in every invasion. They carried troops, ammunition, fuel, tanks, landing craft, airplanes – and everything else needed to establish and maintain an amphibious invasion.

For example, mariner-crewed Cape Stevens took part in the invasion of Gilbert Islands, Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Saipan, southern Palau Islands, and Iwo Jima. Liberty ship Tabitha Brown brought in supplies for the landings in Sicily, Salerno, Anzio, and Southern France.

During the invasion of Normandy there were 200 mariner-crewed cargo ships, each carrying 480 men and 120 army vehicles; 33 blockships deliberately sunk to create an artificial harbor; 10 troopships carrying up to 2,600 troops; and 28 tugs.

1. The cost is \$36 million in the first year.

Fairness, not cost is the issue!

Mariners were denied a free college education, low-cost business loans, priority for jobs, one-year unemployment insurance, free medical care, etc. Mariners – and their families – suffered financial repercussions all their lives.

The average age of World War II mariners is 83, and since the average male lifespan is 72, the estimated \$36 million cost per year would decrease extremely rapidly! After a computer with personal information was stolen in 2006, Veteran Affairs had no difficulty in finding \$26 million dollars to notify veterans and to deal with potential credit problems.

According to a government audit, between 1997 and 2003, the Defense Department purchased and left unused 270,000 fully refundable commercial airline tickets wasting \$100 million.

2. The precedent ... would likely result in additional spending... (referring to the other 33 groups who received Veteran Status)

While signing the GI Bill on June 22, 1944, President Roosevelt stated:

"I trust Congress will soon provide similar opportunities to members of the merchant marine who have risked their lives time and time again during war for the welfare of their country."

Roosevelt did not say "and Women Air Service Pilots (WASPs), civilian airline employees, etc." In May 1944, Congress called the WASP program "unnecessary and undesirable" and had them disbanded. Of the 1,830 women who enrolled, 1,074 graduated, and 39 died in accidents.

Statistics on the total number of WWII mariners vary, but 250,000 is a common figure. Approx. 8,400 mariners were killed on American-owned ships due to torpedoes, bombs, mines, kamikazes, collisions in convoy, or grounding in uncharted waters. Another 1,100 died later of their wounds, according to testimony before Congress. 35,000 mariners were repatriated because their ships were sunk, thus 1 in 8 mariners lost their ships. 114,000 men and women received the Combat Bar, signifying enemy attack.

The Merchant Marine seal is prominent on the World War II Memorial, equal to those of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Army Air Forces, and Coast Guard. 595 mariners are buried or commemorated in American Battle Monuments Commission National Cemeteries overseas.

According to international law, mariners lost their civilian status when they manned offensive weapons. A typical merchant ship had a 4-inch cannon forward, 5-inch aft, and 10 anti-aircraft guns. During General Quarters, mariners who were off watch were assigned battle stations as gunners, loaders or ammunition passers.

Instructions to Masters from the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox

(Op-23L-JH (SC) S76-3 Serial 097923) March 30, 1942:

"It is the policy of the United States Government that no U. S. Flag merchant ship be permitted to fall into the hands of the enemy... The ship shall be defended by her armament, by maneuver, and by every available means as long as possible..."

War Shipping Administration, Operations Regulation No. 35:

"It is the desire of the Navy Department to instruct and train the officers and men of the merchant crew in all matters pertaining to gunnery and defense of their vessels."

3. Comparison with Medal of Honor

Some legislators compare the proposed \$1,000 per month benefit to the payment received by those awarded the Medal of Honor. Mariners are not trying to equate their service to these great heroes, but chose an **arbitrary sum** to help make up for the injustice they suffered.

According to Congressman Filner, the **current value of benefits received by all other Veterans of World War II is \$1 million dollars**. \$1,000 per month paid to 83 year-olds is an absolute bargain!

It is ludicrous for some legislators to claim that receiving "full veteran benefits from VA" in 1988, is equivalent to the GI Bill granted other veterans in 1944.

4. Mariners were subject to military justice and received military medals.

The Uniform Code of Military Justice states, "... persons subject to this chapter: In times of war, persons serving with or accompanying an armed force in the field." In 1942, Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, the Chief of Naval Operations, directed that Naval discipline and control was to be exercised against Merchant Marine crews while in all theaters of war.

General Eisenhower, asked for and received permission from President Roosevelt, to award military medals to men of the Merchant Marine. Mariners were awarded: **Navy Cross, Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Bronze Star, Navy Marine Corps Medal, Purple Heart.**

5. Mariners were employees of private shipping companies.

War Shipping Administration was established by President Roosevelt, Executive Order No. 9054. February 7, 1942"

"Control the operation, purchase, charter, requisition. and use of all ocean vessels under the flag or control of the United States,

"Allocate vessels under the flag or control of the United States for use by the Army, Navy, other Federal departments and Governments of the United Nations... In allocating the use of such vessels, the Administrator shall comply with strategic military requirements."

According to testimony offered in *Schumacher v. Aldridge* (the court decision which led to veteran status for mariners), military authorities controlled the duration of the voyage, the assignment of routes, the destinations, including military invasions, the position in convoy, convoy procedures, shore leave in a war theater, and when to engage the enemy. The shipping company responsibilities extended only to necessary arrangements while in port for repairs, supplies, and longshoremen.

The following letter assigning Capt. Matt Drag to a ship is signed:

“Very truly yours, United States of America, War Shipping Administration, by
International Freighting Corp., Agent.”



INTERNATIONAL FREIGHTING CORPORATION, INC.

AGENTS FOR THE WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION

17 BATTERY PLACE

NEW YORK 4, N. Y.

JANUARY 4, 1945

CAPTAIN MATTHEW M. DRAG
C/O I. F. C. LINES
17 BATTERY PLACE
NEW YORK, N. Y.

DEAR CAPTAIN DRAG:

THIS WILL CONFIRM OUR VARIOUS CONVERSATIONS WITH YOU, AS A RESULT OF WHICH WE TAKE GREAT PLEASURE IN ASSIGNING YOU AS MASTER OF THE S/S "JOHN G. TOO", WHICH VESSEL IS NOW IN THE PORT OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA. THIS ASSIGNMENT WILL BE EFFECTIVE AS OF THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1945 AT WHICH TIME YOU WILL LEAVE NEW YORK TO JOIN THE VESSEL AT SAN FRANCISCO.

WE HAVE PROVIDED FOR YOU, FIRST CLASS RAIL TRANSPORTATION FROM NEW YORK TO SAN FRANCISCO, INCLUDING PULLMAN ACCOMMODATIONS FROM NEW YORK TO CHICAGO. YOU WILL PURCHASE PULLMAN ACCOMMODATION FROM CHICAGO TO SAN FRANCISCO WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT CHICAGO. IT WILL BE IN ORDER FOR YOU TO REIMBURSE YOURSELF FROM YOUR MASTER'S ACCOUNT FOR THIS EXPENSE AND OTHER INCIDENTAL EXPENSES INCURRED WHILE TRAVELING, AND ALSO FOR SUBSISTENCE WHILE TRAVELING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF OUR AGREEMENT WITH THE MASTERS, MATES AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION.

UPON YOUR ARRIVAL IN SAN FRANCISCO REPORT TO OUR AGENTS, MCCORMICK STEAMSHIP COMPANY, 451 MARKET STREET, WHO WILL ADVISE YOU AS TO THE LOCATION OF THE VESSEL. YOU WILL GO ABOARD AND TAKE COMMAND FROM CAPTAIN THOMAS J. NIELSEN. YOU WILL ALSO MEET IN SAN FRANCISCO, MR. F. FLORIANI OUR PORT PURSER, AND MR. WILLIAM MURPHY OUR ASSISTANT PORT ENGINEER, WHO WILL ASSIST YOU IN EVERY WAY WHILE THE VESSEL IS IN PORT.

YOUR WAGES IN THIS POSITION WILL BE \$415.00 PER MONTH.

VERY TRULY YOURS,

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION

BY: INTERNATIONAL FREIGHTING CORPORATION, INC.
AGENT

BY: W. A. NIELSEN
OPERATING MANAGER

RN:CM

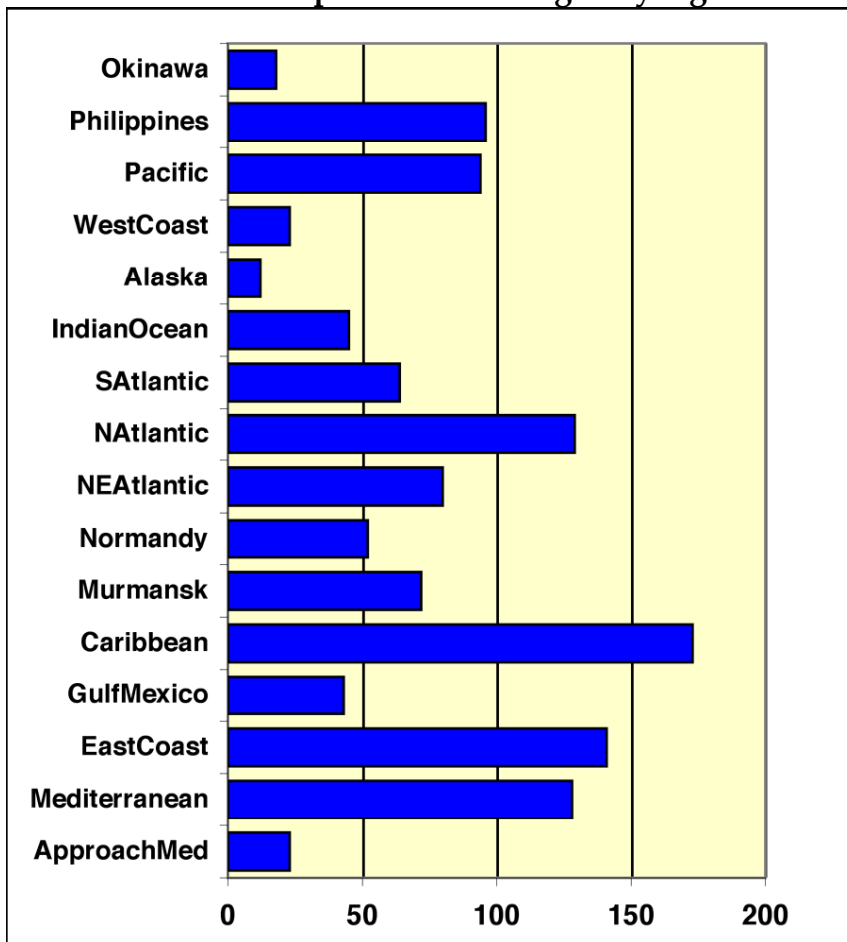
CC: CAPTAIN J. V. JORDAN
CAPTAIN R. N. EGLESTON
MR. F. FLORIANI
MRS. D. HAYES

6. Mariners could choose voyages and quit at any time.

During World War II, Masters of ships were given sealed orders, which they opened only after leaving port, thus mariners could not possibly choose voyages. Only U.S. Navy, U.S. Army, or Allied port officials knew their route and destination. If the cargo had Cyrillic lettering and they were issued fur mittens, they could guess their destination was Murmansk.

It is true that mariners could choose their voyages to some extent. If they sailed from San Francisco, the main west coast port, they were certain to go to the South Pacific or Alaska. On the other hand, if they sailed from Boston or New York, they would go to Great Britain, Murmansk in northern Russia, the Caribbean, Brazil, Chile, or the Red Sea. If they shipped from Newport News they usually went to North Africa or the Mediterranean.

Merchant Marine ships sunk or damaged by region



Cadet-Midshipman William Jopes was assigned to the tanker Yamhill as part of his required six months sea service. He went aboard in Portland, Oregon in late Nov. 1943, and arrived in Baltimore in late August 1944.

The tanker was assigned to the British War Ministry to shuttle fuel from the Persian Gulf to India and Australia. During one of their passages through the Indian Ocean, Yamhill battled a Japanese submarine for 12 hours and refueled the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga. A WWII carrier pilot wrote Jopes:

“We carrier pilots somehow received most of the glory and good press, however, without the fuel, ammunition and supplies aboard the merchant marine, none of us would have made it off the flight deck.”

The tanker Sylvan Arrow was torpedoed in the Caribbean on May 20, 1942; survivors were torpedoed again on June 10 while being repatriated to the U.S., and torpedoed on a third ship on June 14.

During World War II, men with experience at sea were forbidden to work in shipyards or to use State Employment offices. During an 8-month period 1943-44, 600 men with sea experience were released from the Army and required to return to sea.

7. Many young men and boys thought they were joining a branch of the Armed Forces

The War Shipping Administration recruited 16 and 17 year-old boys to “Join the Fighting Men of the Merchant Marine.”

Other young men and boys went to a U.S. Navy Recruiting office, were told to “sit there.” Later, a uniformed man walked in, asked, “do you have any more for me?” That’s how they the enlisted in the U.S. Maritime Service, the training arm of the War Shipping Administration.

Their instructors at boot camp wore U.S. Navy and Coast Guard

Join the FIGHTING MEN OF THE U.S. MERCHANT MARINE

Some of the Thousands of Apprentices Seamen at Sheepshead Bay Training Station, Brooklyn, N. Y.

OPPORTUNITY for... Advancement
If you want a seagoing career, and learn a trade at the same time, enroll now for training with the U. S. Maritime Service.
* Men of the U.S. Merchant Marine are doing a heroic job delivering supplies and war equipment to our fighting forces overseas.

U.S. MARITIME SERVICE

 For information apply

uniforms. Their own uniforms and dog tags looked just like those of the Navy. They learned gunnery. When they went off-base, they saluted all Army or Navy officers. They thought they were in the military!

8. Mariners Pay Equal to Army or Navy

Navy personnel were exempt from income taxes, while merchant mariners paid income taxes and "Victory" taxes. Every man serving aboard a merchant vessel, with the possible exception of the master and chief engineer, could earn more money ashore in a shipyard or defense plant without taking the chance of being killed by bombs or torpedoes.

Their Navy Armed Guard shipmates had medical care for themselves and their dependents. Mariners got a maximum of 60 days medical care in a Public Health hospital. No benefits for dependents.

The following study was done in 1943, before the additional benefits provided by the GI Bill.

Annual income after taxes

	Navy	Mariner
Seaman first class vs. Ordinary seaman	\$1,886	\$1,897
Petty officer second class vs. Able seaman	2,308	2,132

Benefits

	Navy	Mariner
Cash value permanent disability, mariner		\$6,290
Cash value partial disability, Navy personnel	\$11,500	
Death benefit, mariner		5,000
Death benefit, Navy petty officer third class	468	
Cash value, mariner widow's pension		0
Cash value, Navy widow's pension	15,350- 27,000	

9. Bill would grant veteran's benefit to individuals who are not veterans.

Mariners who served between August 16, 1945, and December 31, 1946 became veterans with the passage of the Merchant Marine Fairness Act of 1998.

I, Tamara Horodysky, do not currently receive any money from a federal contract or grant. During the past two fiscal years, I have not entered into any federal contracts or grants for any federal services or governmental programs.

I, Tamara Horodysky graduated with a degree in chemistry from Rutgers University, Newark College of Arts and Sciences, in 1964. I worked as a chemist for several companies and eventually became a technical writer. During the past years I have been involved in human rights work for a non-profit organization, and for the past 9 years have designed and done most of the writing for www.usmm.org, American Merchant Marine at War. This is an unpaid activity. I am a resident of Berkeley, California.